



## SERVANT LEADERSHIP: THE DECIDING DIFFERENCE

### Lesson 1 - What is Servant Leadership?

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#### Transcript

[TEXT: Young African Leaders Initiative Online Training Series]

[TEXT: Mandela Washington Fellowship Institute Course]

[TEXT: Servant Leadership: The Deciding Difference]

Greetings. My name is Sandra Edmonds Crewe. I am professor and dean of the Howard University School of Social Work. I am also an instructor at the Howard University Public Management Institute of the Mandela Washington Fellowship. I'm pleased to have you join me for the course Servant Leadership: The Deciding Difference.

In our first lesson, we'll examine the origins and philosophical and theoretical underpinnings of servant leadership.

The idea of servant leadership emerged nearly 40 years ago and has revolutionized the way many workplaces function. This course will provide a broad overview of the growing influence this inspiring idea is having on people. We'll also go over the key styles of leadership, and the origins and principles of servant leadership. We will discuss the benefits and criticisms of servant leadership and learn about strategies for implementing it. So let's begin.

#### What is servant leadership?

It is both a philosophy and a practice of leading. It places the good of those led over the self-interest of the leader. Servant leadership promotes the valuing and development of people, the building of community, and the practice of authenticity. Further, servant leadership promotes shared power. Servant leadership seeks excellence in management through an organizational culture of civility and community building. It seeks to tap into individual strengths and collective efficacy.

There is a nexus between public servants and servant leadership. Former U.S. President Harry S. Truman once said, "It's amazing what you can accomplish if you don't care who gets the credit."

Servant leadership is akin to African Ubuntu that is loosely translated as the essence of being human. It embraces hospitality, caring about others, and being able to go the extra mile for the





sake of others. With Ubuntu, a person's humanity is bound with others. Paraphrasing Bishop Desmond Tutu, a person with Ubuntu is open and available to others, affirming of others, and does not feel threatened that others are able and good. With Ubuntu, damage to one damages the whole. Servant leadership and Ubuntu are closely related forms of leadership.

What are some leadership situations that might call for servant leadership? Would you agree with any of the following statements?

- I feel that I carry the weight of the organization on my shoulders.
- I have lost the joy in coming to work or participating in the group.
- I am out of the communication loop.

Affirming any of these statements is indicative of the need to explore the benefits of servant leadership.

Before I delve more into servant leadership, let's talk about leadership in general. What is leadership? Bernard Bass provides a practical definition of leadership: He states leaders are agents of change — persons whose acts affect other people more than other people's acts affect them. Leadership occurs when one group member modifies the motivation or competencies of others in the group. Research has indicated that leadership begins with accepting and taking up one's role within a community. When the concept of "self in community" is viewed as the essential building block of shared leadership, we are active participants in a shared experience.

Servant leadership challenges the traditional assumption that a leader must also be the head of a group.

In the next lesson, we will look at five key styles of leadership.

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